

Application No. 09/173,858

The Examiner states, with regard to claim 1, that "there is nothing about the steps of how the interface works (sic)," in the claim; and suggests this omission renders the claim indefinite. However, the manner of operation of a computer system implementing the interface is not relevant to the claim. It is the structure of the interface that is claimed.

Claim 1 recites an interface comprising the specification of an interface stored in memory. The specification of the interface includes definitions of input documents and output documents for the interface in terms of storage units and logical structures stored in memory.

The "interface" recited in the preamble of claim 1 can be used in many ways. One of the advantages achieved by the invention is that the manner of operation of a computer system implementing the interface is independent of the specification of input and output documents of the interface. Thus, it is submitted that claim 1 is definite as required under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph.

Claims 2-16 depend from claim 1, and are believed allowable for the reasons discussed above.

Accordingly, clarification or withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-16 on this basis is respectfully requested.

With regard to claim 61, the Examiner states, "There is nothing about how the programming of a commercial transaction works," in the claim; and suggests this omission renders the claim indefinite. Applicant is unsure why the Examiner believes that the claim does not include something about how programming the transaction works. The claim states that the programming is accomplished by first defining input and output documents in terms of descriptions of storage units and logical structures, and by providing interpretation information for the logical structures to a node in the network being programmed. The commercial transaction is therefore "programmed" by providing interpretation information for the logical structures in the input and output documents defined for the transaction to at least one node in the network.

Claims 62-72 depend from claim 61, and are believed patentable for the reasons discussed above.

Accordingly clarification or withdrawal of the rejection of claims 61-72 on this basis is respectfully requested.

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Rejection of Claims 1-16 and 61-72 under 35 USC § 101

The Examiner rejected claims 1-16 and 61-72 under 35 USC § 101 as directed to non-statutory subject matter. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration.

Claim 1 recites a product in terms of structural limitations, and is explicitly statutory subject matter under § 101 as a “useful ... machine, [or] manufacture ...” Claim 1 reads as follows:

1. *An interface for transactions among nodes in a network including a plurality of nodes which execute processes involved in the transactions, comprising:*

a machine readable specification of an interface to transaction processes stored in memory accessible by at least one node in the network, including interpretation information providing a definition of an input document, and a definition of an output document, the definitions of the input and output documents comprising respective descriptions of sets of storage units and logical structures for the sets of storage units.

The Examiner concludes, without explanation, that claim 1 “does not disclose any functional subject matter.” However, claim 1 can be characterized as reciting “functional descriptive material” consisting of data structures and computer programs stored in memory. *See, Examination Guidelines for Computer-Related Inventions-Final Version*, Section IV, B., 1, published by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. When encoded in memory, the data structures impart functionality to the claimed product, that is the ability to act as an element of an interface. Accordingly, claim 1 recites patentable subject matter in the form approved by *In re Lowry*, 32 F. 3d 1579, 1583-1584, 32 USPQ2d 1031, 1035 (Fed.Cir. 1994), rehearing denied.

Claims 2-16 depend from claim 1, and are patentable for at least the same reasons. Further, such claims recite additional features independently supporting a finding of patentable subject matter.

Claim 61 recites a useful process, and is explicitly statutory subject matter under § 101. Claims 62-72 depend from claim 61, and are patentable for at least the same reasons. Further, such claims recite additional features independently supporting a finding of patentable subject matter. Claim 61 reads as follows:

61. *A method for programming a commercial transaction in a network, comprising:
defining a machine-readable definition of an input document for a node in the network
including resources to execute a process in the transaction, and a machine-readable definition of an
output document for the node, the definitions of input and output documents comprising respective
descriptions of sets of storage units and logical structures for the sets of storage units; and
providing interpretation information for logical structures to the node.*

The Examiner concludes, without explanation, that claim 61 "does not disclose any functional subject matter." However, the acts of "defining ..." and of "providing ..." stated in the claim are functional steps. Accordingly, the Examiner's position is not understood.

Accordingly, withdrawal or clarification of the rejections under 35 USC § 101 is respectfully requested.

Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner's attention is drawn to the Information Disclosure Statement filed with the present paper.

CONCLUSION

It is submitted that the present application is now in form for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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